Ray Brother Linked To King Case

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WASHINGTON (UPI)—The House Assassinations Committee told a brother of James Earl Ray Thursday that it had incriminating information linking him to an alleged family conspiracy to finance the stalking and killing of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Jerry Ray, brother of James who pleaded guilty to shooting King, denied any knowledge of a $27,000 bank robbery the committee suspects might have financed the assassination.

He also denied that a third brother, John, took part.

Committee staff counsel Mark Speiser said panel investigators have received "information of an incriminatory nature" that Jerry Ray participated in the July 13, 1967, robbery of an Alton, Ill. bank, presumable to provide funds for James Earl Ray to pursue and kill King and flee to Canada and Europe.

Jerry Ray tried in vain to invoke the Fifth Amendment, despite a grant of immunity from prosecution, and his attorneys attempted unsuccessfully to have "speculative" remarks based on "circumstantial evidence" by committee counsel stricken from the record.

The committee has been trying to establish whether James Earl Ray was assisted by his brothers in a "family conspiracy" to kill King and collect a $50,000 bounty allegedly offered by St. Louis businessmen.

John Ray, arrested Monday in St. Louis on burglary and assault charges, is scheduled to appear before the panel Friday.

Jerry Ray's counsel Florence Kennedy, a black lawyer, repeatedly protested that neither local nor federal authorities were able to establish responsibility for the Alton bank robbery.

Ray told the committee that he is now working for J.B. Stoner, the Atlanta white supremicist who is chairman of the National States Rights party.

Asked about statements he allegedly made to writer Arthur George McMillan concerning James Earl Ray's escape from the Missouri State Penitentiary on April 23, 1967, Jerry Ray said he could not "remember all this stuff."

"I don't remember saying that," said Jerry Ray, referring to a comment he allegedly made about his brother John helping James Earl escape from prison.

As the hearing opened, chief committee counsel G. Robert Blakey said the panel "is about to try to settle once and for all the crucial issue of a conspiracy."

Referring to the mysterious "Raoul" whom James Earl Ray has identified as his contact in the murder case, Blakey said, "When you come down to it, the Raoul theory that seems to fit is that the mysterious accomplice might actually be one of Ray's brothers, Jerry or John, or a composite of the two of them."

Blakey said there was evidence, some admittedly circumstantial, that Jerry or John Ray met with James at various places in the United States from the time James escaped from the Missouri State prison until King's assassination.

These meetings, he said, often coincided with dates on which James later claimed he met "Raoul" to pick up money and instructions.

The committee heard extensive testimony Wednesday about an alleged $50,000 reward offered by two deceased St. Louis men for King's death, and the possibility that James Earl Ray killed King in hopes of claiming it.

On Wednesday, St. Louis auto parts dealer Russell G. Byers told the committee that two St. Louisans, John Sutherland and John Kauffmann, both now deceased, offered Byers $50,000 to kill King.

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AP Wirephoto

'Raoul'? He Denies It

Jerry Ray, brother of James Earl Ray, appeared before the House Assassinations Committee yesterday to deny any connection with the death of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Story on Page 6.